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UNCLAS DHAKA 001704

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: Attacks in 2005 on "Un-Islamic" Targets

Ref: Dhaka 0361

1. (SBU) Since 1999, there have been at least 18 unsolved bombings against the political opposition, cultural events, and other people and occasions viewed by Islamist extremists as "un-Islamic" (reftel). In 2005, there has been a clear broadening of such attacks.

2. (SBU) Media and other sources report the following incidents:

-- In the early hours of January 10, a petrol bomb hurled at a Jatra (cultural) show in Digpait in Jamalpur district injured 10 people, including performers.

--On January 12, explosions at a drama festival at village Chakpara in the northern district of Sherpur injured 10 people. Police arrested two suspects.

--On January 14, an explosion at a Jatra festival in the northern Bogra district killed one person and injured about 40 others. The same night explosions at another Jatra show in neighboring Natore district injured 10 members of the audience. One of the injured persons later died.

--On January 20, three bombs at a Jatra show in Sharishabari sub-district in Jamalpur district injured about 40 people, including a female dancer.

--On January 27, unidentified persons hurled two bombs on stage during a folk music session at Golmunda in the Jaldhaka sub-district of Nilfamari district. One female artist was injured.

--On February 10, unidentified people hurled two bombs at an office of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) NGO in Gaibandha district causing injuries to three BRAC employees.

--On February 13, two persons died in an attack on the BRAC office in Kalai sub-district in Jaipurhat.

--On February 14, four bombs went off at a Valentine's Day function near the Teachers-Students Center at Dhaka University, injuring about 40 people. Police recovered and defused three more bombs from the spot.

--On February 15, four BRAC employees sustained injuries in a bomb attack on their office in Porsha sub-district in Naogon district.

--Also On February 15, three hand grenades were found in the BRAC office in Rangpur.

--On February 16, two employees of the Grameen Bank branch at Nabagram village in Ullapara sub-district of Siranjanj district sustained injuries as unidentified people hurled bombs. Grameen is a micro-credit pioneer famous for helping mostly poor rural women.

--On February 27, a Molotov cocktail exploded near the Grameen Bank office at Tahirpur in the Bagmara sub-district of Rajshahi.

--On March 1, an office of CARITAS at Govindapur in Khansama sub-district in Dinajpur district caught fire following the explosion of two petrol bombs.

--On March 25, activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, barred a cultural group in Chittagong University from screening two films critical of Islamic conservatism and made the organizers show instead two commercial movies.

3. (SBU) Comment: On February 23, police arrested 17 alleged Islamist leaders and banned two Islamist organizations in connection with the attacks on BRAC, which may account for the sharp falloff in attacks in March.

THOMAS